Department of State

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TELEGRAM

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EXCISE

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9
ACTION EA 19

INFO SAL 01, GPM 03, SC 01, RSC 01, USIA 12, H 02, NSC 10, NSA 02, L 03,
INR 07, P 04, CIA 04, DOD 01, SP 02, SS 35, RSR 01, SAH 02, AID 30, IO
/161 W

R 150910Z AUG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4606
INFO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 3132

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: SAIGON 2741

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS AUGUST 14, [ ] VERNACULAR DAILY [ ] AND [ ] OF TOAN VIET BLOC, CONFIRMED THAT TOAN VIET HAD BEEN ORGANIZED BY GVN IN EFFORT TO SECURE ELECTION OF WORKING MAJORITY FOR THIEU-KY IN THE SENATE. THUS, CONVENTION HAD ENDORSED SLATES 32, 33, AND 34 BEFORE ADJOURNING. [ ] WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THESE LISTS

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COULD BE ELECTED WITH SOLID CAO DAI AND HOA HAO SUPPORT AND HE ESTIMATED THAT A SENATE SLATE NEEDED APPROXIMATELY 750,000 VOTES TO INSURE ELECTION. HE SAID THAT ELECTORS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF BLOC MEMBERS WOULD BE URGED TO VOTE ONLY FOR THE THREE DESIGNATED LISTS AND NO RPT NO OTHERS, THUS AVOIDING POSSIBILITY OF AIDING OTHER LISTS IF THREE BALLOTS

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CHOSEN MORE OR LESS AT RANDOM WERE PLACED IN THE ENVELOPES TO FILL OUT A SET OF SIX. ACCORDING TO [redacted] BLOC HAD NOT INTENDED FORMALLY ENDORSE ANY PRESIDENTIAL SLATE.

2. SPEAKING OF OTHER LISTS, [redacted] OPINED THAT SUCH PRESTIGIOUS INDIVIDUALS AS TRAN VAN DO, DANG VAN SUNG AND MME TRAN VAN VAN WOULD NOT BE ELECTED. HE IS STRONGLY OF THE OPINION THAT ONLY THOSE LISTS ENJOYING MASS SUPPORT FROM ONE OF THE RELIGIOUS SECTS (CATHOLIC, BUDDHIST, CAO DAI OR HOA HAO) REALLY STAND MUCH CHANCE OF WINNING. DO ET AL HAVE NOT AS YET BEEN ABLE TO ORGANIZE ANY SUCH SUPPORT.

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3. SPEAKING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, [redacted] SAID THAT HE HAD ADVISED THE THIEU-KY ENTOURAGE THAT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THEM TO ROLL UP MAJORITIES IN THE URBAN CENTERS OR RISK HAVING THE ELECTIONS CALLED A FRAUD. HE FELT THAT THE THIEU-KY SLATE CAN EASILY WIN IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, BUT UNLESS THEY DO WELL IN THE CITIES WHERE MOST OF THE OBSERVERS WILL BE ON HAND TO WATCH OVER THE POLLING AND COUNTING, THEIR VICTORY IS LIABLE TO BE TARNISHED. HE SAID FURTHER THAT AT AN EARLIER STAGE HE HAD RECOMMENDED TO THIEU-KY THAT THEY STEP DOWN DURING THE ACTUAL CAMPAIGN PERIOD. (HE HAD SUGGESTED GENERAL PHAM XUAN CHIEU AND GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG AS TEMPORARY REPLACEMENTS AS CHIEF OF STATE AND PRIME MINISTER, RESPECTIVELY.) IN [redacted] VIEW, THIS WOULD HAVE DONE THE REGIME AN IMMENSE AMOUNT OF GOOD FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF WORLD OPINION.

4. [redacted] FEELS THAT A THIEU-KY VICTORY IS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION. THEY ARE, AFTER ALL, AS A RESULT OF TWO

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YEARS IN OFFICE, AS WELL KNOWN AS THE OTHER CANDIDATES. FURTHERMORE, THE CIVILIAN VOTE WILL BE WELL FACTIONALIZED AMONG THE TEN OTHER CANDIDATES. PREDICTING THE FINAL OUTCOME, [redacted] IS INCLINED TO FEEL THAT IT WILL BE THIEU, SUU AND HUONG IN THAT ORDER, WITH THE TWO CIVILIANS RUNNING CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER.

5. TALK THEN TURNED TO THE OTHER CANDIDATES. [redacted] FEELS THAT TRAN VAN HUONG IS A STRONG, INTELLIGENT CANDIDATE, BUT HE IS INCLINED TO RATE HIM BEHIND SUU IN POPULARITY. AS FOR SUU, HE CONSIDERS HIM A NICE OLD PARTY WITH ON REAL IDEAS IN HIS HEAD. HIS RUNNING MATE, PHAN WUANG DAN, HE CHARACTERIZED AS POTENTIALLY MORE AUTHORITARIAN THAN DIEM. HE RELATED HAVING BREAKFASTED THAT MORNING WITH NGUYEN XUAN OANH(JACK OWEN"), WHO TOLD HIM OF THE DIFFICULTIES HE (OANH) HAD ENCOUNTERED AS TREASURER OF THE SUU-DAN LIST. ACCORDING TO OANH, THE LIST IS IN SOME FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY, DUE TO THE "EXCESSIVE" DEMAND OF DAN.

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6. LATER IN THE CONVERSATION, [redacted] INQUIRED IN DETAIL ABOUT THE CLIMATE OF OPINION IN THE UNITED STATES AND PARTICULARLY WHETHER THERE WAS A WEAKENING OF RESOLVE ON THE PART OF THE USG TOWARD ITS VIET-NAM COMMITMENT. EMBOFFS PROVIDED [redacted] WITH CHAPTER AND VERSE, LAYING HEAVY EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE AND HONEST ELECTIONS. [redacted] INDICATED AN APPRECIATION OF THE PROBLEM, SPOKE AT LENGTH ABOUT THE NEED FOR A RESPONSIBLE PRESS TO REPORT THE ELECTIONS, AND SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN DOING HIS BEST TO EXPLAIN THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM TO HIS COLLEAGUES BOTH IN THE GVN AND IN PRESS CIRCLES.

COMMENT: [redacted] IS A BRIGHT, AGGRESSIVE JOURNALIST WHO HAS, IN THE PAST, DEMONSTRATED DAI VIET TENDENCIES AND A WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE ON OCCASION WITH THE THIEU-KY GOVERNMENT. HE IS NOT, HOWEVER COMPLETELY IDENTIFIED AS A GOVERNMENT MAN AND HE HAS A BROAD CIRCLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL POLITICAL FRIENDS. HIS REMARKS,

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THEREFORE, SHOULD BE VIEWED AS THOSEOF AN INTELLIGENT SAIGON POLITICIAN WITH A THIEU-KY BIAS.

GP-3.

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